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Board of State Canvassers would lose authority over ballot questions under Senate plan

LANSING — Legislation introduced today in the Michigan Senate would give responsibility for putting ballot questions before voters to professional, nonpartisan Secretary of State staff instead of the Board of State Canvassers.

“The Democratic board members exhibited outrageous conduct in disenfranchising 10 million citizens of their constitutional right to vote on amending their own constitution,” said Sen. Alan Cropsey, R-DeWitt, the lead sponsor of the legislative package. “They refused to follow the nonpartisan, professional advice of Bureau of Elections staff. They refused to follow the law, and they refused to follow a valid court order. They have demonstrated a decided intent to trash our laws, and even the constitution.

“Instead of upholding the constitution, they voted to hand over everyone’s rights to a special interest mob. Clearly, these members lack an ethical compass and should no longer deal with ballot questions.”

The package of bills would make the director of the state Bureau of Elections responsible for approving the ballot petitions as to form and deciding whether ballot questions have received an adequate number of signatures to go before voters. The elections director is a nonpartisan, civil service position within the Secretary of State’s Office.

“The Board of State Canvassers continues to turn its back on the citizenry’s right to petition government and to have their say at the ballot box,” said Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema, R-Wyoming. “That board has proven it is incapable of upholding its constitutional authority to protect the balloting process. Handing that authority over to a qualified, professional staff in which people can have some faith may help restore the damage done.”

Sikkema and Cropsey, who is a former member of the Board of State Canvassers, have called on the two Democratic board members to resign or be removed by the governor.

The proposed legislation would retain the board’s constitutional role in certifying election results.

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